NICK KENT PREVIEWS THE T. REX MOVIE

Bore To Boogie

OH DEAR. JUST when dearest Marc should be saving the last remnants of his charisma and concerning himself with lying low for a while, getting a new band together, finding some new riffs and gaining a whole new credibility, here comes yet another nail in the coffin of the great T. Rex Overkill process.

Premiere: LONDON Brewer St / Oscar One / Thursday. From Jan 1: Hammersmith Broadway; Croydon/ Brentford / Catford ABCs; Waltham Cross Embassy 3.

Yes, kids, the news is that "Born to Boogie" is a bad, often atrocious film. Cheap, pretentious, narcissistic and noisy.

As a rock 'n' roll film, it's one of those total-personality efforts — As opposed to the pain-in-the-ass "Mad Dogs and Englishmen"/"Stomping Ground" syndrome of boring documentary.

Remember those old "rock" films where the current pop-idol of the day would be built into a feeble plot and given ten new songs to sing for the sound track? These films usually fell into the Universal Paradox concept of cheapo-cheapo cinema — which means they were so bad they were good. "Born to Boogie" is so bad it's bad, mainly because the film restricts itself to one message.

Marc, Marc and more Marc.

It's just all too easy to put this film down and, as I'd prefer to think I'm not among the clique of vehement Bolanophobes, I'll concentrate on the more interesting aspects of the whole thing.

"Boogie's" only saving grace is that it gives the viewers a chance to objectively view Bolan as he wants us to view him. Half the film is taken up with the T. Rex show at Wembley. The camera, naturally, fixes itself almost exclusively upon Bolan. We occasionally get a chance to watch Mickey Finn earnestly trying to play the congas while members Currie and Legend are seen only when they happen to accidentally find themselves next to where Marc is being filmed.

Otherwise we are allowed the privilege of exploring almost every pore of the features of the bopping elf — which may sound your kind of meat, but left the more hardened souls in the screening theatre a trifle bored. Bolan's stage movements are unremittingly narcissistic — he preens himself continuously when not throttling his guitar-neck.

Actually, when not shaking his hair back and cutting pseudo-sultry poses in response to the teenage screams (fortunately the audience, though intense and hysterical, do not sound like a blizzard passing through the cinema as they do in "Bangla Desh"), he actually makes some hot-action moves with his legs just like real rock-'n'-ollers do.

The music is fuzzy, primal and repetitive but that's O.K. There's a good version of "Jeepster" sounding like it's being played in the middle of a swamp.

The most embarrassing part of the film — and it is truly horrible — is when Marc decides to play acoustic. New heights of fey precociousness are reached as Bolan strums the most blatantly out-of-tune guitar I've possibly ever heard, and whines obnoxiously for over five minutes. Both Starr and Bolan should be shot for letting this gruesome scene go through.

The audience are shown turning the Empire Pool into an endless series of sticky seats with good old teenage hysteria. Little girls, mostly just out of puberty, and all dressed up like their idol, scream self-consciously as the camera zooms in on them.

In between the live footage Bolan and director Ringo Starr have decided to amplify things with a little weirdness. Bolan claims that this is "a film with surrealistic overtones" which means we have a couple of embarrassing episodes (I hesitate to use the word Fellini-esque simply because it would be an insult to the director just to mention his name in the context of this film) — one in particular being a recreation of the tea-party of "Alice in Wonderland" which has Marc playing acoustic to string quartet accompaniment while Mickey Finn gorges himself with disgusting plum jam.

There actually is one really good scene in this film. T. Rex. performs "Tutti Frutti" with Ringo Starr on the drums and Elton John playing great piano. Here the band really do rock, and just when you think it's too good to be true they move into a fine, fine version of "Children of the Revolution" which cuts the single to pieces. Ah, if only the film had carried on from there, but no . . . It's time for more Wembley Pool histrionics.

In the publicity blurb for the film, it claims that "Born to Boogie" is "a film about that which is happening in pop music — NOW! . . . . .

"It is not intended as a documentary of our time and moment — but simply an offering to appeal to those youngsters — maybe starting around 11 years and up'ards who just wish to hear *their* music . . . . .

Fair enough, Marc and Co. — just so long as the kids can relate to it. But then, who was it who said "You can't fool the Children of the Revolution"?

December 16, 1972

Elton and Marc: great piano

Bolan: preens himself